money has been spent on the nuclear explosions carried out by India at Pokharan in 1999 which could be diverted towards the development plans of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) to (c) Government is aware of reports of foreign financial assistance to Pakistan's nuclear programme. In addition, China has provided assistance, *inter-alia,* in setting up an unsafeguarded reactor and plutonium reprocessing facility, provided ring magnets, heavy water, diagnostic equipment, etc. Pakistan has also acquired nuclear technology and equipment from Western countries. In contrast, it is universally recognised that India's nuclear programme, the oldest in Asia, is totally indigenous.

India has an extensive civilian nuclear programme that generates considerable socio-economic benefits. Further, India's nuclear policy has always been marked by restraint ensuring of minimum necessary action to safeguard the country's critical security interests. Thus, the costs involved with the exercise of India's nuclear option have been minimum.

Issuance of passports for plane Hijackers

792. SHRI NAGENDRA NATH OJHA:
SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some of the hijackers of Indian Airlines plane and their associates, allegedly Pakistani citizens, acquired Indian passports from Mumbai;

(b) if so, whether any inquiry has been coundcted into the matter; and

(c) the action taken, if any against the travel agency and Government official for their involvement therein?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The investigating authorities have arrested the proprietor of the travel agency involved. Three employees of the Regional Passport Office, Mumbai, three police personnel, two postal employees and fifteen other people have also been arrested.

Sale of Fake Indian Currency by Pak Embassy Official

793. DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item titled "Nepal Police trap Pak embassy official selling fake Indian currency" which appeared in the Indian Express dated the 4th January, 2000; and

(b) if so, what steps are being taken on the above matter by Government, so far?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Government are aware of media reports regarding the detention of a Pakistani Embassy official by the Nepal Police in Kathmandu following the seizure of counterfeit Indian currency worth Rs. 50,000/- in 500-rupee denomination from his possession. Assam Saboor, UDC in the Pakistani Embassy in Kathmandu, was caught red-handed on January 2, 2000, while passing off the counterfeit Indian currency notes to an under-cover officer of Nepal Police. On January 5,2000, he was asked by the Government of Nepal to leave the country within 72 hours on account of "his involvement in an activity incompatible with his status".

The incident gives further credence to the reports received by the Government of India indicating evidence of ISI involvement in the circulation of fake Indian currency in Nepal. The matter has been taken up with the Government of Nepal. While appreciating the deterrent action taken by the Nepal authorities against the Pakistani Embassy official, the Government of India have also conveyed their concern and sought the cooperation of the Government of Nepal on this issue. On their part, the Government